DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 900 PS 029 344

AUTHOR	Sitrin, Barbara
TITLE	Recruitment, Training, and Retention of Volunteers in Youth-Serving Organizations: A Review of the Literature. Working Paper.
INSTITUTION	Chicago Univ., IL. Chapin Hall Center for Children.
SPONS AGENCY	Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust, Chicago, IL.; Prudential Foundation, Newark, NJ.
PUB DATE	2000-08-00
NOTE	29p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago, 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637; Tel: 773-753-5900; Fax: 773-753-5940; Web site: http://www.chapin.uchcago.edu (Publication No. PS-27).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Literature Reviews; Mentors; Research Needs; *Voluntary Agencies; *Volunteer Training; *Volunteers; Youth Agencies; Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Big Brother Big Sister Programs; Volunteer Recruitment; Volunteer Retention; *Volunteerism

ABSTRACT

Noting a paucity of research on volunteerism, this report examines research on volunteer recruitment, training, and retention, particularly in youth-serving organizations that rely on volunteers to accomplish their missions. The report also proposes questions for further research. The report notes that while the number of individuals volunteering has increased in the United States in the late 1990s, the average number of hours volunteered by individuals has decreased. Data to support a particular profile of the typical volunteer are lacking, and practitioners are recommended to develop volunteer profiles at the agency or organization level. Motives for volunteering are then examined; it is suggested that there are intricate and layered links between volunteer recruitment, training, and retention that merit further study. Some volunteer training is grounded in sound pedagogical and psychological theory, some appears to have simply evolved. Some studies have linked volunteer commitment to their participation in determining training needs and methods. The report notes that although no clear consensus could be gleaned from research on volunteer retention, some correlations between retention and organizational structure, volunteer motives, and volunteer management merit further study. The findings of a 4-year evaluation of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America programs are cited as useful to other youth-serving organizations. The report concludes by asserting that reviewing the research literature has underscored the difficulty of designing studies that will provide useful data to the field and has shown that volunteer recruitment, training, and retention are interrelated in complex ways. (Contains 45 references.) (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 451 900

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Recruitment, Training, and Retention of Volunteers in Youth-Serving Organizations: A Review of the Literature

Barbara Sitrin

Working Paper

PS 029344

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Gonen

2A TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CHAPIN HALL CENTER
FOR CHILDREN
at the University
of Chicago

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Recruitment, Training, and Retention of Volunteers in Youth-Serving Organizations: A Review of the Literature

Barbara Sitrin

Chapin Hall Center for Children
at the University of Chicago

August 2000

This paper was funded by the Midtown Educational Foundation (MEF) through a grant to MEF from the Prudential Foundation. The planning phase of the work reported here was supported by the Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust.

© 2000 Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
773/753-5900 (voice) 773/753-5940 (fax)

PS-27

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Volunteer Recruitment—Who Volunteers and Why? 2

Toward a Volunteer Profile 3

Volunteer Motives 5

Volunteer Training 10

Volunteer Retention—What Influences It? 12

Volunteerism in Youth-Serving Agencies 16

What Have We Learned? 18

Bibliography 20

Introduction

Volunteerism is certainly not a new phenomenon, yet it appears to be changing in tandem with or because of social, political, and economic shifts in our country. From the highest levels of national government[1] to nearby community programs, Americans are being urged to volunteer. Public service announcements, often featuring celebrities from the entertainment industry encouraging us to become role models and mentors for young people, abound on radio, on television, and in print. High schools and colleges have added mandatory community service requirements to their curricula; businesses and corporations are encouraging if not requiring their employees to become community service volunteers. There are now web sites, national organizations, and international conventions devoted to volunteer matters as well as publications that focus exclusively on volunteerism.[2] With this increased emphasis on volunteerism, now may be an opportune time to step back and assess the status of volunteerism in the U.S., what is known about it, and what remains to be learned.

Interest in volunteerism may be intense, and materials pertaining to practical matters such as volunteer recruitment, management, and performance may be plentiful. However, research literature about volunteerism is scant and much of it is descriptive. Additionally, most research studies about volunteerism are limited in size, scope, and generalizability. There is general agreement among experts in the field about the paucity of volunteer research; there is no concomitant shortage of research questions about volunteerism.

---

[1] National and Community Service Acts of 1990 and 1993 and the National and Community Service Amendments Act of 1998.

[2] Such as the *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, the *Journal of Volunteer Administration*, and the American Volunteer Association (AVA).

Examining volunteerism is complicated by the amorphousness of the subject matter. Does volunteerism refer to individuals who volunteer, organizations that use volunteers, the act of volunteering in its many forms (including virtual volunteering, i.e., volunteering on the Internet), the effects of volunteers and volunteering, volunteer management, some or all of the above?

The scope of this paper will be research studies related to volunteer recruitment, training, and retention, particularly in youth-serving organizations that rely on volunteers to accomplish their missions. It should also be noted that studies included in this review may address only one or several aspects of volunteer recruitment, training, and retention and may or may not have been conducted in youth-serving organizations. Nevertheless, the studies have been included because they inform at least some aspect of the discussion. This paper will also propose questions for further research in these areas. Some questions will come directly from the researchers whose studies are included; others will grow out of the discussion itself.

Volunteer Recruitment—Who Volunteers and Why?

Independent Sector (IS), a national coalition of nearly 800 corporations, foundations, and private voluntary organizations whose mission is to encourage philanthropy, volunteering, not-for-profit initiative and citizen action, commissioned the Gallup Organization in the mid-1980s to conduct biennial surveys to measure volunteer activities and charitable giving in the United States. In the most recent of these surveys, in-home personal interviews of 2,553 Americans 18 years of age and older were conducted. They showed a rise in the number of Americans volunteering in 1999 to 109 million (56 percent of the adult population), a 13.7 percent increase from the previous (1996) study, and the highest number since the national surveys were begun (Independent Sector,

1999). However, data from the same 1999 Gallup Organization survey indicate a decline in the average number of *hours* volunteered per week in the U.S. between 1995 and 1999. That is, while the number of individuals volunteering has increased, the average number of hours volunteered by individuals has decreased. Therefore, the assertion by some that there is a resurgence of volunteerism in this country may be only partially accurate. Similarly, those who presume that the pool of volunteers in this country has been depleted by a rise in the number of women working outside the home may have to rethink their premise as well. In fact, surveys cited later in this report indicate that most volunteers are employed. Taken together, these findings suggest that data must be read and interpreted carefully and critically. They also underscore the confusion that exists about the current state of volunteerism in our country.

Toward a Volunteer Profile

It seems reasonable to assume that developing a profile of those who volunteer would enable organizations to target their recruitment efforts more effectively toward individuals they are likely to attract. And understanding what motivates individuals to volunteer their time may enable organizations to tailor and market their recruitment efforts toward those motives, again making their recruitment efforts more effective.

A number of articles about volunteers and volunteerism contain variations of a phrase often used to describe the typical U.S. volunteer—white, middle-class female, between the ages of 22 and 45—although data to support that profile are lacking. A 1990 doctoral dissertation about volunteer motivation and attitudes reports the results of a survey conducted in Britain in which participants were asked to describe the typical volunteer in their country. Respondents believed the typical volunteer was a non-working older woman with no children at home

(Lapham, 1990). However, a national study conducted by The Volunteer Centre (VC) in London did not support the perceptions of the survey participants. Instead, the VC survey results showed female volunteers outnumbered male volunteers by only a slim margin (54 percent to 46 percent); the more hours individuals worked, the more likely they were to volunteer; most volunteers were married and between the ages of 25 and 44 (Lapham, 1990). Data gathered in the U.S. by the Gallup Organization for Independent Sector indicate similar results (Independent Sector, 1998), leaving one to speculate about the origin of the inaccurate profile of the typical volunteer.

Some studies compare values and demographics of volunteers and nonvolunteers in an effort to develop a volunteer profile. For example, a study of 285 college students in a large, public university was conducted to see if students who were community service volunteers shared characteristics that distinguished them from students involved in extracurricular but non-service activities and/or from students not involved in extracurricular activities at all (Fitch, 1991). The results do little to generate a volunteer profile. Only 16 percent of the total number of students sampled were found to volunteer in community service activities; most were white females who lived in residence halls. They scored higher than other students on the Benevolence and Conformity scales of the Survey of Interpersonal Values (SIV) and lower on the Independence scale.

Perhaps practitioners in the field would best be able to provide an accurate if not empirically derived volunteer profile based on their field experiences. It may also be wiser and more useful to develop volunteer profiles at the agency or organizational level rather than nationally if the purpose of a profile is to assist agencies and organizations in their volunteer recruitment efforts.

Volunteer Motives

Some researchers have sorted volunteer motives into categories such as altruistic and egoistic, intrinsic and extrinsic; others have borrowed concepts from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and organizational theory to try to explain volunteer motivation.

Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen provide a particularly thorough and thoughtful summary of what is contained in the literature about motivations to volunteer through 1990 as a prelude to their own 1991 study of volunteer motives. From their extensive literature review, they compiled a list of twenty-eight motives to volunteer (MTV) they then used to measure motivation to volunteer in human service agencies. Their study included interviews of volunteers and non-volunteers. They concluded that a combination of altruistic and egoistic motives leads people to volunteer (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991).

Serow examined motives for volunteering among college students using a survey with fifty-one items that was administered to 759 students in four public universities; just under one-third (260) of the surveyed students identified themselves as community service participants (CSPs). Of those, ninety-five were invited to be interviewed individually resulting in a total of forty-two (63 percent female, 85 percent white) being interviewed. Interviewees were asked to identify from among a list of twelve reasons for volunteering the reason(s) that entered into their decisions to become community service volunteers (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Decision Factors Supporting Participation in Community Service

Item	Percentage of participants mentioning item
Sense of satisfaction from helping others	80
Involved through club, activity, or class	56
Duty to correct societal problems	54
Meeting people	49
Acquiring career skills and experience	42
Attraction of the work itself	36
Religious beliefs	28
Someone asked me	24
Example of parents and family members	23
Repayment for services previously received	7
Other	6
Visiting the volunteer center on campus	3

Serow noted the frequency with which altruistic reasons were given for volunteering, although he later added an egoistic twist to his interpretation of the data by suggesting that volunteering provides an alternative to the passivity of being a student and allows students to feel good about themselves (Serow, 1991).

D'Braunstein and Ebersole compared student volunteers with non-volunteers to determine whether or not volunteers had a more altruistic focus in their lives than non-volunteers. Participants were asked to write essays about what was most personally meaningful to them in their lives. Using a system of categorizing personal life meanings to analyze the essays, the researchers expected to find volunteers scoring significantly higher in the service

category defined a "a helping, giving orientation dealing with people in the abstract" (Ebersole & DePaola, 1987, p.185 as cited in D'Braunstein & Ebersole, 1992). They did not. Instead, they found the greatest difference between the two groups in the growth category, that is, "meaning through self-improvement and understanding" (Ebersole & DePaola, 1987, p. 187 as cited in D'Braunstein & Ebersole, 1992). They go on to suggest that more effective recruitment and satisfaction of volunteers would be accomplished by emphasizing both the service or helping possibilities of the volunteer position *and* the potential for personal growth and development and to provide explicitly for that within the program (D'Braunstein & Ebersole, 1992).

In a 1990 study, Latting focused on motivational differences between black and white volunteers. "Most studies investigating volunteer motivations have been tested on predominantly white populations, and their findings have been applied indiscriminately to minorities of color despite increasing evidence that ethnic groups differ behaviorally, in their cognitive assessments, and in their 'world views'" (Sue, 1978, Pedersen, 1985 as cited in Latting, 1990). Latting combined a review of the literature about minority volunteering with data gathered for a previous study, to determine if differences in self-reported attitudes, motivations, and personality characteristics existed among Big Brother/Big Sister volunteers. She found significant sociodemographic differences between black and white volunteers. Controlling for age, gender, length of service, and student status, Latting found blacks more likely to indicate altruistic norms and motives (than egoistic norms and motives) for volunteering compared to white volunteers. She concludes that "reports presuming that all volunteers are similarly motivated without regard to race or ethnicity must be viewed as suspect and inconclusive" (Latting, 1990). Moreover, she suggests that these findings may have implications for volunteer recruitment and retention.

If, as these studies suggest, a combination of motives leads individuals to volunteer, then organizations that rely on volunteers would be wise to identify the motives of their volunteers and assign them to tasks likely to satisfy those motives. It may very well be that organizations with successful volunteer programs do just that.

Despite the fact that Edwards & Watts begin their 1983 empirical analysis of recruitment and retention of human service volunteers with what may now be deemed an outdated premise, (i.e., volunteerism is on the decline), their investigation of volunteer recruitment and retention efforts in human service organizations merits attention. A self-administered questionnaire sent to administrators of 261 human service agencies in Virginia yielded responses from 124 agencies (47 percent). Respondents ranked four commonly-used recruitment methods (word of mouth, newspaper appeals, contacts with relatives of clients, and radio/television appeals) and six strategies for retaining volunteers (reimbursing expenses, providing training, providing opportunities for promotion to paid employment, increasing flexibility, increasing responsibility). Edwards & Watts conclude that social service agencies have not been very creative in altering their volunteer recruitment and retention efforts in the face of increased challenges to maintaining their volunteer workforce (Edwards & Watts, 1983).

Viewing motivation among volunteers from a psychological perspective, Gil et al. propose a functional approach to determining volunteer motivations, assigning volunteer tasks, and satisfying volunteer needs thereby increasing the likelihood that individuals would continue to volunteer (Gil, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992). Their approach establishes links among volunteer recruitment, placement, and retention. To identify volunteers' motivations, they developed a Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) that yields scores in six motivation categories—social,

value, career, understanding, protective, and esteem—that result in a motivational profile for a volunteer or prospective volunteer.

Once volunteer motivations have been identified, they propose tailoring recruitment efforts to those volunteer motivations. Applying the functional model further, they suggest matching volunteers with tasks that coincide with their motivations for volunteering. "Functional theory suggests that volunteers will be satisfied with their involvement precisely to the extent that it meets their needs, goals, and motivations. From this proposition it follows that volunteers whose motivations are fulfilled by their service will remain with the organization for longer periods of time" (Gil, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992). They conclude by suggesting that their approach provides "volunteer administrators and researchers of volunteer behavior an opportunity for fruitful collaboration" (Gil, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992).

Emphasizing the need for volunteers in this country and underscoring the importance of their effective use in organizations, United Parcel Service conducted a study to examine consumer attitudes toward volunteering, volunteer management, and obstacles to volunteering. A national telephone survey of 1,030 consumers plus 1,400 interviews in seven metropolitan areas in the U.S. were conducted in 1998. Among the study's findings were the following:

- Three-fourths of American adults report having served as volunteers during their adult lives. Nearly one-third of the total adult population and 58 percent of current volunteers are volunteering between 1 and 5 hours per month; 24 percent of the adult population volunteer more than 5 hours per month.
- More than half of those surveyed indicated that volunteering is more important today than it was five years ago, although nearly the same number of respondents report volunteering the same amount of time or less than they did five years ago.

- Respondents indicated they would be likely to volunteer more if the volunteer organization would make good use of their time, was well managed, would better use their talents, defined tasks clearly, thanked them, and if the experience would help their careers (Volunteerism Today. A Report from United Parcel Service, 1998).

This section began with a rather simple and direct assumption that developing a profile of those who volunteer and knowing more about their motivations would be useful to volunteer recruitment efforts. It ends by suggesting there are intricate and layered links between volunteer recruitment, training, and retention that merit further attention and study.

Volunteer Training

It is difficult to find research studies about volunteer training. Manuals, guidelines, forms, how-to materials, workshops, web sites, conventions and more form the current body of practice knowledge about volunteer training. While some volunteer training is grounded in sound pedagogical and psychological theory, and some has been shaped by organizational theory, some appears to have simply evolved.

Leeds describes the development of a training session for New York University undergraduate volunteers in youth programs in community agencies in New York City. Underpinning the training is the idea that "there are important principles of theory, research, and practice that are applicable to a wide variety of activities, and should be disseminated. Activities such as tutoring and group leadership, often performed by non-professionals, can be enriched by the perspectives of psychologists and others who have studied what helps, and what is important in working with individuals and groups" (Leeds, 1996, p. 98). Based on this premise, a psychological concept known as the *working alliance* or *helping alliance,* derived from

psychoanalytic theory to describe the relationship between a person seeking change and a change agent, was combined with practical knowledge about working with young people to develop a training session that relies heavily on role-playing to convey its content (Leeds, 1996). Leeds links the roles of the university, the community, and the volunteers. "We feel the university has more to offer the community than the already considerable contribution of the time and effort of committed and enthusiastic volunteers. It has a mission to develop knowledge, and to codify research and experience in ways that can enrich the lives of all" (Leeds, 1996, p. 101).

A survey was sent to more than 2,400 volunteer 4-H leaders in Pennsylvania to gather data about their previous training, perceived training needs, and preferred training methods (Cook, Kiernan, & Ott, 1986). Data from approximately 1,500 respondents indicated: volunteers with no previous training were more likely to want future training; tenure as a 4-H volunteer did not influence desire for training; all twenty-three aspects of leadership training listed on the survey form were sought by significant numbers (from 64 percent to 85 percent) of respondents; and preferred training methods varied with the aspects of leadership being taught (Cook, Kiernan, & Ott, 1986). The authors conclude that volunteers recognize their need for training and want it. Moreover, they link volunteer commitment with volunteer participation in determining their training needs and the methods used to train them.

A less obvious connection between volunteer training and volunteer commitment is made by Meissen and Lounsbury in their study comparing expectations of volunteers, children, and parents in a Big Brother/Big Sisters program (Meissen & Lounsbury, 1981, p. 250). They examined time spent together, money spent, duration of the match, and eleven potential benefits each child and family might derive from the match. They found significant lack of agreement about the importance of the 11 potential benefits between match members. They go on to

suggest that working to produce more congruent expectations (via volunteer and participant orientation and training, for example) might result in longer lasting matches. They also suggest research questions: "Do differences in expectations exist prior to the initiation of the relationship? Does the present initiation and orientation process help eliminate differences in expectations? Would efforts specifically aimed at improving the congruency of expectations of the members of a match help circumvent problems in the match?" (Meissen & Lounsbury, 1981, p. 256) and propose a longitudinal study to follow matches over time.

Volunteer Retention—What Influences It?

Several studies among the modest number of research studies about volunteerism found in the literature examine volunteer characteristics in an effort to link them to commitment and longevity of service among volunteers. Burke & Hall (1996) set out to find an indicator for volunteer longevity (and quality of performance) but came up empty. They administered the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) to 67 volunteers (39 men and 28 women) over a two-year period in a Companions for Children program in North Dakota. The results did little to provide an indicator. Neither MMPI scores nor personal factors about the volunteers (age, gender, education) correlated with length of service as a volunteer. Only a negative correlation with the MMPI category "hysteria" was established (Burke & Hall, 1986).

Citing the importance of being able to screen volunteers successfully for participation in Big Brothers/Big Sisters America to ensure the likelihood that matches made between adult volunteers and young people will endure (a minimum one-year commitment is required of BB/BSA adult volunteers), Herman and Usita investigated the predictive validity of the 16 Personality Factor (16 PF) Questionnaire. In a study that spanned two years (April 1989 through

April 1991), all volunteer applicants to a single Big Brothers/Big Sisters agency completed the 16 PF. By their own admission, their findings were inconclusive (Herman & Usita, 1994).

The same researchers conducted a later study to test the 16 PF in predicting volunteer attrition (Herman & Usita, 1994). In particular, they were seeking specific 16 PF factors that might be associated with volunteer longevity. Again, their sample of 22 BB/BS volunteers was small. Of those, 11 were identified as committed volunteers by BB/BS staff, and 11 were deemed uncommitted because they did not fulfill their one-year volunteer commitment. In this study, the 16 PF correctly classified all volunteers into their respective categories. "While the 16 PF shows promise as a commitment screening tool, further research is necessary. Continued improvements in commitment screening will help save significant time, resources, and stress associated with volunteer attrition" (Herman & Usita, 1994).

In another study that also drew its data from Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteers and the 16 PF Questionnaire, the results of Form A of the questionnaire that had been administered to sixty BB/BS volunteers in a single agency over a three-year period (1989-91) were analyzed. Volunteers were grouped into one of two categories, depending on whether or not they had completed their volunteer commitment. Significant differences between volunteers who had completed their commitment and those who had not were found on five traits: intelligence, social inhibition, imaginative thinking, trust, and self-assurance. Successful volunteers were found to be older and more educated as well (Spitz & MacKinnon, 1993).

Rubin and Thorelli examined the relationship between volunteer motives and retention. Following a detailed discussion of concepts about volunteer behavior found in the literature and establishing a theoretical framework, they designed an empirical study to test their hypothesis:

" . . .in a setting in which the costs of volunteering probably outweigh its egoistic benefits, the longevity of participation as a service volunteer will be inversely related to the extent to which the service volunteer's entry was motivated by the need for or expectation of egoistic benefits" (Rubin & Thorelli, 1984, p. 227). They gathered data from 90 case records of Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteers who had terminated their participation in the program and found strong support for their hypothesis. Based on their findings, they suggest that prospective volunteers with largely egoistic motives should not be considered desirable applicants in social service organizations where helping relationships are needed between volunteers and their charges.

In a 1983 doctoral dissertation focused on volunteer retention, Rodriguez set out to isolate and measure variables that influence volunteer longevity. Using a social-psychological framework and W. I. Thomas' theory that all human behavior is motivated by four needs/wishes —security, new experiences, responses, and recognition—she demonstrated a correlation between an organization's ability to meet its volunteers' needs and its volunteer retention rate. She went on to recommend a longitudinal study to investigate the relationship between organizational structure and volunteer retention (Rodriguez, 1983).

In an entirely different setting, Benjamin Gidron examines "stayers" and "leavers" among volunteers in three Israeli community centers in an effort to identify variables that predict retention and attrition among volunteers (Gidron, 1984). He grouped variables into three categories—personal, organizational, and attitudinal—and found that attitudinal variables and, to a lesser extent, organizational variables are the best predictors of retention among the volunteers he studied. "The major predictors of retention in volunteer work include good preparation for the particular task, placement in a job in which the volunteer can find self-expression and where he feels his work can produce results, and all this within an environment with positive peer

interaction" (Gidron, 1984, pp. 14-15). He goes on to emphasize the importance of the organizational structure in volunteer retention. "The policy implications of these findings are clear: agencies interested in the service of volunteer workers may have a considerable degree of control over the withdrawal or retention decision of the volunteer by manipulating certain organizational variables, the most important of which is the individualization of the volunteers' tasks" (Gidron, 1984, p. 15).

Dailey combined an impressive review of the literature pertaining to organizational commitment with a research study that examined organizational attachment among volunteers and factors likely to foster it. He suggested that research beyond identifying motives that lead volunteers to offer their services should be conducted. "Researchers need to recognize there is a wide range of behaviors and attitudes that materialize and drive volunteer activity well after the decisions to join and donate energy and time have been made (Dailey, 1986, p. 30).

Research sponsored by United Parcel Service's Foundation suggests that poor volunteer management practices affect volunteer longevity. While constraints on their time is the reason given most often by volunteers for no longer volunteering for an organization, 40 percent of volunteers surveyed cited poor volunteer management practices as the reason they discontinued volunteering for an organization. (United Parcel Service, 1998). Similarly, Cnaan and Cascio found that "variation in volunteer performance variables, especially volunteer satisfaction and tenure, can be explained in part by practices of volunteer management" (Cnaan & Cascio, 1999, p. 28).

Although no clear consensus can be gleaned from the research studies about volunteer retention cited here, a variety of significant correlations—between organizational structure and

volunteer retention; between volunteer motives and retention; between volunteer management and retention—that merit further study are suggested by them.

Volunteerism in Youth-Serving Agencies

A review of research literature about volunteerism, particularly in youth-serving agencies, would not be complete without mentioning a significant body of studies reported by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) during its six-year investigation (1988-1994) to determine the usefulness of mentoring as an intervention for at-risk youth. Much of P/PV's research was done during a four-year evaluation of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA) and yielded a series of reports including:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters: A Study of Program Practices;

Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters;

Big Brothers/Big Sisters: A Study of Volunteer Recruitment and Screening.

The reports themselves are part of P/PV's mentoring initiative, and their contents highlight issues specific to meeting the demand for mentors to tutor at-risk youth. Although that may limit the generalizability of their findings, the P/PV reports do provide a model for examining practices at the agency/organizational level. This may provide a useful model for other organizations that wish to examine their volunteer recruitment process.

In the volunteer recruitment and screening study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters, data were collected from eight BB/BS agencies throughout the country. Demographic information was collected between February and July of 1993 from all 2,532 individuals who inquired about volunteering and tracked to determine the outcome of their screening process. Site visits to four of the agencies, interviews with agency personnel, reviews of files of rejected volunteers, and

focus groups of volunteers at various stages of the screening process were all elements of the study. Among the questions addressed by the study were:

- How are prospective volunteers recruited by Big Brother/Big Sister agencies?
- Who responds to recruitment efforts?
- How long does the recruitment and screening process take from beginning (inquiry) to end (match)?

Demographic data about all who inquired about volunteering at the eight agencies indicate a large majority were white (74 percent), 58 percent were female, and two-thirds were under 30 years of age. One-third had completed college and an additional 10 percent had attended graduate school.

Among the study's findings were:

- Agency efforts to recruit volunteers were assisted by national advertising campaigns for Big Brothers/Big Sisters that provided name recognition for the organization. At the same time, recruitment materials created by the local Big Brothers/Big Sisters agencies that are specific to the local communities in which they operate and word-of-mouth are most effective in recruiting volunteers.
- Forty-three percent of those who inquired about volunteering proceeded to apply to become a Big Brother or Big Sister.
- The Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer screening process may take three to nine months or longer to complete. It includes an application, an orientation session, a criminal records check, a request for references, a personal interview, and home assessment.

- During a nine-month review of the volunteer screening process, 37.3 percent of applicants became Big Brothers or Big Sisters.

Additional findings and details of the study, which are too lengthy to include here, may be particularly useful to organizations wishing to review their own volunteer recruitment and screening practices or to compare their data with another volunteer organization.

What Have We Learned?

Volunteer research is scant and largely inconclusive at the same time that volunteerism is very much in the national eye—being promoted, encouraged, and taking on new directions in our quickly changing technological age. Organizations are recruiting, training, and trying to retain volunteers without the luxury of time or manpower to evaluate their own practices. Ideally a balance between practice and research with each informing the other would enhance what is known and done in the field.

This review of the research literature about volunteerism has underscored the difficulty of designing studies that will provide meaningful data to inform the field. Most of the existing studies are small, limited in scope, and produce findings that are not generalizable. The variables are many. The data are difficult to obtain. The results are unconvincing.

At the same time, this review has shown that volunteer recruitment, training, and retention are not discrete aspects of volunteerism. Rather, they are interrelated in complex ways and impact upon each other. Some of the more significant correlations appear to be between volunteer retention and volunteer management practices; volunteer motives and needs and volunteer retention; and organizational commitment and volunteer retention.

The research did not provide a useful profile of a typical volunteer. However, if the purpose of developing a volunteer profile is to assist volunteer organizations in their recruitment efforts, then it may be more useful to develop a volunteer profile at the agency level rather than nationally. Many agencies may already do so formally or informally.

Some of the studies cited in this review suggest that a combination of motives not only leads individuals to volunteer, but influences volunteer satisfaction and retention. It would follow that organizations that rely on volunteers would be wise to identify the motives of their volunteers and assign them to tasks likely to satisfy those motives. It may very well be that organizations with successful volunteer programs do just that.

A promising initiative grew out of the 1998 United Parcel Service Report cited previously and appears to be bridging the gap between research literature and field practices. The report indicated that ineffective volunteer management is a problem for many not-for-profit organizations and is an obstacle to recruiting and retaining volunteers. In response to those findings, the UPS Foundation launched a Volunteer Impact Initiative to help nonprofit organizations improve the effectiveness of their volunteer management. Five not-for-profit organizations were given grants to design and implement innovative approaches to recruiting and managing volunteers. The Initiative is currently in its second year (UPS Volunteer Impact Initiative Report, 1999).

It may very well be that allowing research and practice to inform each other will prove most useful to understanding and enhancing what we know and still need to know about volunteerism.

Bibliography

Brudney, J. L. (1990). *Fostering volunteer programs in the public sector*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Burke, D. M. & Hall, M. (1986). Personality characteristics of volunteers in a companion for children program. *Psychological Reports 59*(2, Pt. 2), 819-825.

Clary, G. E., Snyder, M., & Ridge R. (1992). Volunteers' motivations: A functional strategy for the recruitment, placement, and retention of volunteers. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership 2*(4), 333-350.

Cnaan, A. C. & Cascio, A. A. (1999). Performance and commitment: Issues in management of volunteers in human service organizations. *Journal of Social Service Review 24*(3/4), 1-37.

Cnaan, R. A. & Goldberg-Glen, R. (1991). Measuring motivation to volunteer in human services. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 27*(3), 269-284.

Cook, M. J., Kiernan, N. E., Ott, H. R. (1986). 4-H volunteers training: Who needs it!, *Journal of Extension*, Fall, 30-34.

Dailey, R. C. (1986). Understanding organizational commitment for volunteers: Empirical and managerial implications. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research 15*(1), 19-31.

D'Braunstein, S. & Ebersole, P. (1992). Categories of life meaning for service organization volunteers. *Psychological Reports 70*(1), 281-282.

Edwards, P. K. & Watts, A. D. (1983). Volunteerism in human service organizations: Trends and prospects. *The Journal of Applied Social Sciences 7*(Spring-Summer), 225-246.

Fisher, J. C. & Cole, K. M. (1993). *Leadership and management of volunteer programs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Fitch, R. T. (1991). Differences among community service volunteers, extracurricular volunteers, and non volunteers on the college campus. *Journal of College Students Development 32*(6), 534-540.

Forst, E & Healy, R. M. (1991). Correlations among religion, commitment, and volunteer participation. *Psychological Report 69*(3, Pt. 2), 1124.

Freedman, M. (1993). *The kindness of strangers: Adult mentors, urban youth, and the new voluntarism*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Furano, K., Roaf, P. A, Styles, M. B. & Branch, A. Y. (1993). *Big brothers/big sisters: A study of program practices*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

Gidron, B. (1983). Sources of job satisfaction among service volunteers. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research 12*(1), 20-35.

Gidron, B. (1985). Predictors of retention and turnover among service volunteer workers. *Journal of Social Service Research 8*(1), 1-16.

Grossman, J.B. (1998). *Contemporary issues in mentoring*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

Helbling, E. A. (1986). *A descriptive study to identify the characteristics of long-term volunteers in a youth-serving organization*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Herman, K. C. & Usita, P. U. (1994). Predicting Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer attrition with the 16 PF, *Child and Youth Care Forum 23*(3), 207-211.

Herman, K.C. (1993). Enhancing screening for child and youth care work with problem-specific measures: An example with Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteers. *Child & Youth Care Forum 22*(6), 459-476.

Herman, K. C. & Usita, P. U. (1994). Predictive validity of the 16 PF in screening volunteers for Big Brothers/Big Sisters. *Psychological Reports 74*, 249-250.

Hollwitz, J., and Wilson, C. E., (1993). Structured interviewing in volunteer selection. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 41-52.

Ilsley, P. J. (1990). *Enhancing the volunteer experience.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Lapham, S. L. (1990). *Volunteer motivation and attitudes: Field and laboratory studies of intrinsic motivation*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter, United Kingdom.

Latting, J. K. (1990). Motivational differences between black and white volunteers. *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 19*(2), 121-136.

Leeds, J. L. (1996). Training student volunteers for community service: A model collaboration. *Journal of Community Practice 3*(2), 95-103.

Lichtenberg, B. (1956). On the selection and preparation of the Big Brother volunteer. *Social Casework 37*, 396-400.

Maesen, W. A. (1976). Evaluation and community volunteer programs: Accountability and impact. *Journal of Community Development Society 7*(2), 129-141.

Meissen, G. J. & Lounsbury, J. W. (1981). A comparison of expectations of volunteers, children, and parents in a Big Brother/Big Sister program. *Journal of Community Psychology 9*, 250-256.

Nassar-McMillan, S. C., & Borders, D. L. (1999). A work behavior analysis of volunteers in social service agencies. *Journal of Social Service Research 24*(3/4), 39.

Puffer, S. M. & Meindl, J. R. (1992). The congruence of motives and incentives in a voluntary organization. *Journal of Organizational Behavior 13*(4), 425-434.

Rodriguez, M. C. (1983). A study and analysis of the variables determining the retention behavior of volunteers. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The American University, Washington, D.C.

Rubin, A. & Thorelli, I. M. (1984). Egoistic motives and longevity of participation by social service volunteers. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 20*(3), 223-235.

Serow, R. C. (1991). Students and voluntarism: Looking into the motives of community service participation. *American Educational Research Journal 28*(3), 543-556.

Shure, R. (1988). *The Identification of Those Most Likely to Volunteer: Characteristics of male volunteers in the Big Brother/Big Sisters program*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Champaign.

Sipe, C. L. & Roder, A. E. (1999). *Mentoring School-age Children: A classification of programs.* Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

Smith, D. H. (1981). Volunteers, and volunteerism. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research 10*, 21-36.

Smith, D. H. (1975). Voluntary action and voluntary groups. *Annual Review of Sociology 1*, 247-270.

Spitz, R. T. & MacKinnon, J. R. (1993). Predicting success in volunteer community service. *Psychological Reports 73*, 815-818.

Stebbins, R. A. (1996). Volunteering: A serious leisure perspective. *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 25*(1), 211-224.

Tierney, J. P.& Branch, A. Y. (1992). *College Students as Mentors for At-risk Youth.* Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

Tierney, J. P., Grossman, J. B., & Resch, N. L. (1995*). Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

UPS Volunteer Impact Initiative Report. (1999). Atlanta, GA: The UPS Foundation.

Volunteerism Today. A Report from United Parcel Service. (1998). http://macvc.org/UPSsurvey.htm

Watts, A. D. & Edwards, P. K. (1983). Recruiting and retaining human service volunteers: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research 12*(3), 9-22.

CHAPIN HALL CENTER FOR CHILDREN
at the University of Chicago
1313 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637
Phone: 773/753-5900 Fax: 773/753-5940
www.chapin.uchcago.edu